



Leicester
City Council

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

12 SEPTEMBER 2001

POLITICAL CONVENTIONS

Report of the Town Clerk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek views on Conventions for Councillor/Officer relationships, incorporating the Councillors' General Principles of Conduct and Model Code of Conduct. In the light of these views, and any further views from the Organisation's Working Party, the Conventions will be adopted by the Full Council as part of its new Constitution.

2. Report

- 2.1 Councillors, when accepting office, agree to abide by the National Code of Conduct, which deals with standards of behaviour and conflicts of interest. This is now seen as outdated and too general. After considerable national debate on probity in public life and reports from the Nolan/Neill Committee, new General Principles of Conduct and a National Code of Conduct have been approved by Parliament. Each local authority is required to produce its own protocols for applying these locally.
- 2.2 The Council has had such protocols in place since March 1998 in the form of the Political Conventions. These have influenced current legislative requirements through being acknowledged in the studies by Steve Leach of De Montfort University. They were adopted with all-party and Officer support after extensive discussion.
- 2.3 The version of the Conventions presented today has been updated to allow for the Cabinet and Scrutiny system. The opportunity has been taken to consolidate the General Principles (now approved by Parliament) and Model Code (expected to receive Parliamentary approval in October). The Code anticipates a new system for defining and declaring conflicts of interest.
- 2.4 These Conventions have been considered and discussed by the Party Groups, the Whips, the Organisations Working Party and the Directors' Board. Further amendments may be recommended to the Council at a meeting of the Organisations Working Party on 20 September. The Council will be asked to approve a final format which draws out the main Conventions for greater impact.
- 2.5 The Conventions are the basis for the fair and consistent working relationships which underpin good local government. They are the baseline for judging

standards of conduct. They therefore need to be widely understood and applied by Councillors and Officers.

3. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Standards Committee's primary role is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. It must advise the Council on the adoption or revision of the Councillors Code and Conventions. It also has the role of advising on or arranging related training. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 That the Political Conventions, incorporating the General Principles of Conduct and Model Code of Conduct be recommended to the Council as the standards of behaviour the Council expects of its Councillors and Officers, and the groundrules for Councillor/Officer relationships.

5. AUTHOR

Tom Stephenson
Town Clerk
Ext: 6300